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"MEMBERS OF ONE BODY"

Six Sermons

BY

SAMUEL McCHORD CROTHERS

Preached at Unity Church, St. Paul, Minnesota

BOSTON
GEORGE H. ELLIS, 141 FRANKLIN STREET
1892

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INTRODUCTION

THERE is a loyalty to one's creed which is to be commended. The man who has a reason for his own opinion, and who has the courage always to declare it, is not to be despised; and each church may well seek to cultivate such loyalty on the part of its members. But it has also a larger work than this. It must teach loyalty to the spirit which is behind all forms of thought and worship. That religious culture is imperfect which does not enable one to interpret sympathetically his neighbor's creed and to see its spiritual significance. In the following sermons I attempted to perform this service for my own congregation; and they are now published with the hope that they may be of some help to others.

In confining my attention to a few famil-

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iar phases of historic Christianity, I have not meant to imply that here we may find the limit to our religious sympathies. Beyond Christianity is humanity. He who begins to ask, "Who is my neighbor?" will not be satisfied with any answer which does not include all the race. But, lest we lose ourselves in barren generalizations, and, attempting to include all, fail to come into close sympathy with any, let us remember that "neighbor" means always the "nigh-dweller." We must begin with the form of faith that is nearest us and that touches us. When we come to understand that and see in it something to love, we shall be prepared to reach out and touch what is still beyond.

St. Paul, Minn., May 1, 1892.

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ROMAN CATHOLICISM

I.

ROMAN CATHOLICISM

ONE cannot treat the Roman Catholic Church as he would one of the little sects into which Christendom is divided. It is an institution august and historic. One may recognize all its corruptions, and yet still admire. Simply to have lived through so many generations and to have adapted itself to so many changing conditions is to have done much. And, unlike many Oriental religions, its life has not been measured by mere duration, but has been full of action. Not "cycles of Cathay," but centuries of Europe and the still more vital years of America, have tested its quality. To attempt to sum up its good and ill, and strike the balance between, would be presumptuous. It is the church of Saint Francis and of the Borgias, of Fénelon and of Torquemada: it has

produced the "Imitation of Christ" and the horrors of Saint Bartholomew's Eve. All this is but to say that it has had a history. It has touched the heights, and has not been unacquainted with the depths of human nature. To judge it is to sit in judgment on humanity. But, not venturing upon this, we may, with profit to ourselves, call to mind some of the good things for which we are indebted to the Catholic Church.

And, first of all, we are indebted to it for the emphasis which it places on the historic element in religion. Engrossed in the present or dreaming of the future, we are apt to forget the past or to treat it with contempt; and, in so doing, we rob the present of its strength and the future of its glory. For, when we would paint the picture of religion, the canvas of the present is too small, and that of the future too unsubstantial, for the large, free outlines. Centuries must pass before we can discern the true proportions of great men or trace the full effects of their thoughts and deeds. As with secular, so with religious

heroes: there is no substitute for the test of time. The new sects of Protestantism suffer greatly from the lack of historic perspective. The little great man of to-day is admired out of all proportion to his worth, and a mere eddy of thought is often mistaken for the main current. Religion is vulgarized by being treated as if it were a new invention, and it is taken for granted that the latest fashion is the best.

The existence of the Roman Catholic Church is a protest against all this. Christianity, it says, is a thing not of to-day, but for all time. It is not merely for the comfort of the private soul, but it has something public and continuous. The grace of which Holy Church is minister is perennial. As there is a spirit of Christ which is immortal, so there is also an ever-living "Body of Christ." The communion of the saints is no mere dogma. All the devout genius of the Church has been enlisted in the work of making it vivid and soul-entrancing. We say of some few famous men that their names have become household words; but the phrase is but faintly expres-

sive of the sacred familiarity of those names which are repeated, generation after generation, in the hours of prayer. Who can estimate the power of the associations that cluster around them? Modern reformers talk much of the "solidarity of the race"; the ancient Church has in a measure realized it. The individual entering it is no more "a stranger and an exile, but a fellow-citizen with the saints and of the household of God."

The worship of the saints seems idolatrous to the Protestant, but it readily yields its finer meanings. For what is worship but unbounded admiration, leading one to devote himself absolutely to the service of the loved one? When with stern iconoclasm we have shattered the idols of self-love, and ceased altogether from our Mammon-worship, there will be time for us to turn our zeal against the worship of the saints; or perhaps then we may be prepared for the worship of larger ideals of manhood than have yet been received into the calendar of the Church. And so, too, the doctrine of apostolic succession needs

only to be enlarged to be made true. It is a quaintly conventional expression of a universal law. There are channels of grace which may be traced through the ages. Tradition has its place as well as intuition. The piety of to-day is the result of the piety of the past, and the institutions of religion are living links binding together the generations.

Closely connected with the historic continuity of the Catholic Church is its power of progress. We are indebted to it for its illustration of a great church adapting itself to ever changing conditions. When I speak of Catholicism as a progressive institution, both friends and foes may take exception to my words. The unchangeableness of the Church is a favorite thesis of many of its most zealous defenders. Founded on a rock, it resists, it is said, the surges of time. In its doctrine and ritual it professes to be always the same; and its bitter adversaries seize upon its words, and accept the superstition of immutability as something well established. Yes, they say, the Roman Church is always the same. It

hunted Giordano Bruno to the death; and it would do the same with every man of science to-day, if it had the power. The fagots and thumb-screws are only laid aside for the fit occasion, and the inquisitor lurks behind the placid mask of the parish priest. A Catholic prelate is supposed to be incapable of disinterested patriotism. Do we not all know what Jesuitism is? The decrees of the popes are never revoked, they are esteemed infallible. Therefore, the Church to-day must be held strictly responsible for whatever it has at any time proclaimed. And it is further said that we need not go back to the past ages. See what Catholicism to-day is in Spain or in South America, and you will see what it aspires to be in these United States.

You perceive the logic of this. No one argues that the Presbyterian General Assembly would favor the burning of heretics because the Calvinists of Geneva once did so. Nor are the great missionary societies accused of seeking to conform American Christianity to the type which alone they are able to propagate in the South Sea Islands.

Catholicism is thus treated because of its own ill-advised boast, but this boast has no justification in fact. The Church survives because it is *not* immutable. It is a power in the nineteenth century because it is able to adapt itself to the thought and aspiration of the nineteenth century. It succeeds in America only in proportion as it becomes American. It may never have the courage to say, "I have been mistaken," — few churches have — but it is continually forgetting the things that are behind. An infallible authority is precluded from acknowledging a blunder. The only thing left for it is to forget it. That is what makes a progressive Catholic such a bad historian.

I do not ignore the long warfare of the Church against science or its continual collisions with advancing thought. These collisions only prove that the huge corporation has moved more slowly than the alert, unencumbered minds of individuals; but yet it has moved, and, in spite of much that has been reactionary, the movement has been, on the whole, an onward one. The

Catholic Church in its astronomy stands to-day with Galileo rather than with the Inquisition. If the controversy of the sixteenth century were renewed, it would scarcely uphold Tetzel. If it would not favor the contention of Luther, it would at least give heed to the moderate counsels of Erasmus. The Protestant controversialist is unjust when he pictures the Church of Rome as so joined to its idols that reformation must always come from without. No greater reformer ever lived than Gregory VII. Many of the councils have dealt unsparingly with old abuses. The founders of the monastic orders were all daring innovators in their day; yet they were not burned, but canonized. The leaders of the Church have been often quick to discern the signs of the times and to face new issues. Leo XIII. writes an encyclical letter on the labor question. Fancy Leo X. doing that: he did not know that there was a labor question. But the significance of the position of the Catholic Church lies deeper than this. Its doctrine of revelation contains a progressive element which is

absent from Protestant orthodoxy. The Protestant in theory limits divine revelation to the Scriptures, and in practice narrows it still further to the summary of Biblical truth contained in his creed. The result is an unavoidable rigidity of thought. No room being left for expansion, freedom can only be obtained by a series of violent explosions. The Catholic avoids this difficulty; for he accepts the Church rather than the Bible as the chief medium of revelation. He thus may appeal to a living authority. The Church is not the custodian of a treasure which cannot be augmented, but it is itself the organ of the religious consciousness. There may be perpetual evolution, with no loss of divine authority.

Those who give least credence to the claims of the Catholic Church to infallibility find great suggestiveness in its underlying philosophy. The Protestant theory of authority in religion must either be accepted or rejected in its entirety. It cannot be modified or enlarged without destroying its meaning, but the Catholic idea may be expanded indefinitely. As the broad

study of sociology takes the place of ecclesiastical history, the conception of humanity as a living body will grow familiar. Its intuitive faiths, its unvarying moral laws, its growing experience, will be accepted as a part of the divine revelation, and given the same obedience now rendered to the decrees of councils and of popes. When this comes to pass, the Catholic idea will not be destroyed, but fulfilled.

This brings us to that characteristic of the ancient Church which is its chief glory, and which is embodied in its name, — its catholicity. It is interesting to observe how the extremes of Christendom unite in their ideals. On the one side are the Catholics, and on the other the Liberal Christians; and yet the words "liberal" and "catholic" are synonymes. I turn to the dictionary, and find "catholic" defined as "universal, embracing all, wide extending, not narrow-minded, partial, or bigoted; possessing a mind that appreciates all truth; free from prejudice; liberal."

That this ideal of inclusiveness has been fully realized by the Catholic Church I do

not believe. If it had been, there would be no excuse for our remaining outside. But it has been partly realized, and that in a direction in which Protestant liberalism has, for the most part, failed. In attending a convention of avowed liberalists, who were seeking a basis for religious union, I was struck with the fact that all kinds of *ideas* were represented, but only one kind of *people*. All who took part in the proceedings were persons who approached religion from the intellectual side. The Catholic Church has sometimes been inhospitable to new ideas, but it has always offered a wide welcome to all sorts of people. Its ideal is in striking contrast to that of Puritanism. To the Puritan the church is a little company of the elect separated from the rest of the world. A standard is set up by which each individual is to be tried. The smaller the sect, the less the variation usually allowed from the received type. This temper survives the rationalizing process, and is seen even in our so-called liberal churches; and we find some of them still taking pride in the thought that they are

composed exclusively of the "best people" of their respective communities. This "leaven of the Pharisees" appears in all forms of sectarianism. Indeed, the word "Pharisee" (separated) is but another name for the self-absorbed sectarian. The Catholic Church is broadly tolerant of human nature. It has a place for its philosophers and moralists; but it understands, also, the needs of those to whom religion, if it comes at all, must come, not through the intellect, but through the emotions and the senses. It has a message to the eye and the ear as well as to the reason; it has learned how to overawe the barbarian by its pageantry; it challenges the admiration of the soldier by its matchless discipline; it appeals to the artistic temperament, for Catholicism is the poetry of Christianity, as Protestantism is its prose; it captivates the imagination of youth, and stimulates the most romantic spiritual ambition; and, when strength and earthly hope are dead, it offers a refuge and a ministry of consolation. It is pre-eminently the religion of the sorrowing, not teaching them to

underrate their sorrow or explain it away, but investing it with divine meaning. Its ritual is a drama unrivalled in its intensity, leading the worshipper by slow, sad steps through all the "stations of the cross," to find at once the symbol of suffering and of salvation.

It is characteristic of the Catholic Church that its splendor does not drive away the poor. A costly Protestant church suggests a rich man's house; but the magnificence of the cathedral suggests the glorious vault of the sky, beneath which all are equal. An Italian writer has well said, "It is a place where the homeless and hungry, driven from the rich man's table, may pray amid marbles and gold, as in a kingdom where he is not disdained, amid a pomp and splendor that does not humiliate him, that even honors and comforts his misery."

In like manner, the Roman hierarchy, rising rank above rank, has done much for the sentiment of equality and fraternity. In ages when the nobly born felt that they belonged almost to another race from the common people, the Church offered an op-

portunity for the poor man to gain distinction. In the never-to-be-forgotten scene at Canossa we may now see only an exhibition of priestly arrogance. But the heart of many a mediæval peasant must have beat proudly as he heard the tale of how the emperor, clad as a penitent, shivered for three wintry days before the door of Hildebrand, the son of a village carpenter; and, when Thomas à Becket and Wolsey met on equal terms with the Plantagenets and the Tudors, it was not forgotten that these great churchmen were great commoners.

We Americans boast much over the fact that there are no impassable barriers between the Presidency and the remotest country school-house. But in the darkest of the feudal ages the aspiring peasant lad might cherish still more dazzling ambitions. The secular aristocracy was closed against him; but there was a spiritual aristocracy, and in that he might rise from rank to rank, till at last he might look down on kings and emperors.

With all its great services, however, the Catholic Church made one mistake from

which it has not yet recovered. At a critical time in its history it proved false to its own principle of Catholicity. In the early years of the sixteenth century it had no more devoted servant than Martin Luther.

If the pope had been a wise man, he would have called the German reformer to Rome, and said: "Brother Martin, a new day has dawned, and we must make ready for its work. The dust and cobwebs of time have gathered over the altar. The windows of the Church are so begrimed that the light of heaven can scarcely struggle through. The Church must be thoroughly cleansed; and you, with your burly strength, are the man to do it. We have had crusading orders and mendicant and teaching orders. Now let us organize the Order of the Holy Broom, which shall sweep away all these old abuses."

But Leo X. was not a wise man; and so, being disturbed in his private plans, he drove Brother Martin out of the Church. And Brother Martin, not being allowed to work from within, did the only thing left

for him: he threw down the broom, and taking up the hammer began to batter down the church walls; and so the great Reformation culminated in the great schism.

From that day the Church ceased to be truly Catholic, and became *Roman* Catholic; but, though dismembered, it still lives, and its ideal universality, though so imperfectly realized, is its greatest charm. Its relation to the modern world is like that of the Holy Roman Empire to the Middle Ages. It is at once the survival of a past greatness and the prophecy of a larger greatness in the future. When the world-empire of the Cæsars had been overthrown, its idea still haunted the mind. Amid the political chaos there was the vision of a great power strong enough to compel order. In its old form the empire was never to be re-established; but the very name kept alive the thought of universal law. The dream of the world-empire may yet find its fulfilment in a world federation.

And so the word "Catholic," narrowed though it has been in its application, is a power for good. It rebukes petty sectarian

zeal, and recalls the high ambition to build a universal church. Looking at it in one way, the Roman Catholic Church seems but a shadow of its former self; but, from another standpoint, it appears as "a shadow of good things to come." It has nothing to fear from sectarian animosity. Its conqueror must have "its secret in his brain." It will yield at last only to a catholicity larger than its own. It stands like a mountain, and sends forth the mountain's challenge: —

> "Let him heed who can or will,
> Enchantment fixed me here,
> To stand the hurts of time until
> In mightier chant I disappear."

Some day that mightier chant will be heard, as worshippers of every name unite in repeating, with fuller meaning, "We believe in the Holy Catholic Church."

CALVINISM

II.

CALVINISM

WHAT has Calvinism done for the world? In order to answer the question, we must first ask, What is Calvinism? I might refer to many ponderous volumes in which theological definitions are given; but, when you had read them all, you might still be as far as ever from the soul which once animated these "bodies of divinity." Would you see Calvinism in the flesh, turn to Bunyan: —

"As I walked through the wilderness of the world, . . . I saw a man clothed with rags, standing in a certain place, with his face from his own house, a book in his hand and a great burden upon his back. I looked, and saw him open the book, and read therein; and, as he read, he wept and trembled. And, not being able longer to contain, he brake out with a lamentable cry, saying, 'What shall I do?'"

The world a wilderness; the man standing with his back to his own house, with a great burden of sin weighing him down, and yet with the infallible word of God in his hands,— we must understand what all these things mean if we would understand what Calvinism was when it was a living power. How that "lamentable cry" rings in our ears! It is the cry of a soul conscious of its absolute depravity, brought face to face with the transcendent vision of divine purity. What is Calvinism? Perhaps it would be better to use the past tense; for that Calvinism which has been such a mighty force has of late been so modified as to lose many of its early characteristics. Calvinism was the very sternest form which Christianity has ever assumed, and in its day the most candid. It was the belief that the world is in ruins, that man is by nature utterly depraved and destined to endless torment, and that all this evil was decreed in the councils of eternity. It was the belief that against this, our frightful destiny, we struggle in vain: our utmost endeavors are powerless; some few God chooses, not

for anything which they have done or are, but for the mere pleasure of his own will, for what he does, he deigns no other answer than that it is for his own glory: "The rest of mankind God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of his own will, whereby he extendeth or withholdeth mercy as he pleaseth, for the glory of his sovereign power over his creatures, to pass by, and to ordain them to dishonor and wrath for their sin, to the praise of his glorious justice."

Can any good come from such a religion as this? Come and see. Calvinism is like that gloomy forest through which Dante wandered, when he the straight way had lost: "Even to think of it renews the fear: death itself could scarcely be more bitter." But we may imitate him: "To disclose the good that there I found, I will tell what else was mine to see." That some good has come from Calvinism every one must admit who is willing to use the New Testament test,— "By their fruits ye shall know them."

Reasoning upon general principles, we

might say that a religious system such as I have described, based upon the doctrine of arbitrary sovereignty, in which God was conceived of as a despot seated on his throne, and man was spoken of as a mere "worm of the dust," would be one which would naturally ally itself with all that was reactionary and despotic in civilization. As a matter of fact, this has not been so. Calvinism has been everywhere the stern nurse of human freedom. It came not from despotic Rome, but had its birth in republican Geneva; and the same men who have declared most unflinchingly the arbitrary character of divine government have been those who have fought most bravely for human liberty. Follow the stream of Calvinistic influence through the civilized world, and what do we find? When France was half Calvinist, France was half free. Louis XIV. knew full well that the greatest enemies to the unlimited despotism which he would establish were the French Calvinists, the fellow-believers as well as the fellow-countrymen of Calvin. So he withdrew the edict of toleration, and that which

has been France's loss has been the gain of the rest of Europe. Follow the struggle since then in England and America, and you will find in the very forefront of the battle for constitutional liberty men with French names. The descendants of the Huguenots may have forgotten their fathers' creed; but, wherever they have gone, they have carried with them the instinctive love of liberty and the hatred of all oppression. Follow that Calvinistic race which we call Scotch-Irish in their migrations to the New World, carrying with them, as most of them have, the Calvinistic creed, carrying, as all of them have, the Calvinistic inheritance, and you will find them, too, fighting always on the side of civil and religious freedom. For the brief space of time when England's Westminster Hall was freed from the shadow of royalty, one notable event happened. Then the Westminster Confession of Faith was born, and not by an accident, did it come in that moment of civil liberty. We read those words of the old Calvinists in which they declare that the will of man is feeble, that the struggling of man can do

nothing, and that all comes by an arbitrary decree to us, the worms of the dust; and we say, as we read, "That is a fit creed for slaves to accept and to follow." Turn to the actual fact, and who were these men who professed this creed and who spoke thus disparagingly of themselves? Who were these men that fought this battle of Calvinism in Europe and America? Admiral Coligny, William the Silent, John Knox who never feared the face of man, sturdy Miles Standish and Oliver Cromwell, — these were the Calvinists. What glorious worms of the dust these were! Would that our thought of the dignity of humanity could bring to the world such men, ready to do all and to dare all! Would that, when we speak of the freedom of the will, we could nerve the will with such divine courage as theirs! These men, who talked a language we scarce can understand, who looked at the world through eyes other than ours, may have been worms of the dust; but they made great mistakes who thought they were the kind of worms that could be trodden on. They

were the men everywhere who made this free civilization of ours, and it is into their blood-bought heritage that we enter. We may disagree with them, we may say they were mistaken; but we dare not despise them or despise their thought.

The creed of Calvinism, as I read it, seems to mean the captivity of the human mind; and yet, as I recall the deeds of these old Calvinists, the bold Hebrew words come to me, "They have taken their captivity captive." The very thoughts which seem to us, not looking at their deeds, to mean despotism meant the arms by which freedom was achieved; and so I come to the conclusion that there must be something more in Calvinism than with a superficial view we have seen,—that there must be a deeper meaning, a more abiding spirit, in that which wrought such great things for us all. I cannot believe the old theosophic doctrine that our personalities are not truly our own, but that life goes on through successive reincarnations of the individual; but this much I do see: that ideas are continually reincarnated, that now in

one form and now in another the great essential powers of the human mind come into play, their earlier life all but forgotten, and, as a new birth in the realm of humanity, the old spirit reappears. So life forces are continually reincarnated, failing in the old religion, coming again in the new form. And so manly courage and sincerity are born anew in the religious world. What we call Calvinism was the old Roman Stoicism born again into Christianity. It was the bravest, most logical and fearless form in which orthodox Christianity has ever been manifested. That which seems to me the essential thing in Calvinism, and that which is eternal, is the intellectual sincerity which belonged to it in its early days, and which gave it the influence it had over the strongest minds of Christendom. It was this absolute devotion to truth, as then it was seen, that gave it power.

There have been many forms of religion which have sought simply to find the beautiful things and pleasant things in life, and, taking them, to make them sacred, and, ac-

cepting what was but half-truth, to make out of that a beautiful faith. It is the faith of tender sentiment. It is the faith of those who are shielded from the world. It is never the faith of strong men, never the faith of warriors, never the faith of statesmen, who have to meet face to face the evil as well as the good. This world of ours is not altogether a pleasant place. Much as we may believe that the heart of the world is love, yet there are claws and teeth to nature. There is blood and strife and sorrow here, and serious men know it; and, when religion is serious, it faces the fact. Religion is not always serious, and not always in the serious mood do men go to the place of worship. And so we have beautiful ritualisms and beautiful half rationalisms, and so we have prophets who say smooth things, and do not dare to face the ultimate consequences of their own creeds; and so under pomp of ceremony the harder facts of life are simply put aside, and in the courts of religion men come to say, All is well, even though they know that the enemy is at the gate. Even Luther himself, with all his

moral fearlessness, had not that intellectual courage which the times demanded. Some of his compromises were at the expense of consistency. Calvin, the young lawyer of France, brought his clear mind to bear on the problems of theology; and this is what he said in effect to the men of the sixteenth century: —

"Friends, let us be absolutely candid, let us take our religion seriously. We have broken away from the authority of church tradition, and appealed to the Word of God. Let us not be like children, choosing only what pleases us; but let us face the whole truth. On some things we agree. We believe, or say that we believe, that every word of these Scriptures is infallible, and that here we have the sole authority in religion. Let us then take it as it is, and follow implicitly where it leads. This Bible of ours has many beautiful things in it. It speaks of the divine love, but just as surely does it speak of the divine hate. It says that God has hated some of his creatures with such quenchless hatred that he will follow them with burning torments

for all eternity. Their lives will be prolonged infinitely, in order that his infinite wrath may be manifested.

"We know, or think we know, the power and freedom of our own wills; but back of the human will is law, and back of law is the higher will, the Eternal. You say that God wills some to be saved and dwell in light, and there are others who are not saved. We all believe that. But God does not will the destruction of any, you say. Ah! seriously, now, is not that involved in our doctrine? If there is that eternal hell and there are those that shall go thither, can you evade the thought that God sent them there? God made them to suffer. God created them for that. Horrible thought, you say. Yes, to me, also; for I am a man. To me, also, it is cause for trembling, because I know not who are those decreed. But it is written so. God says so; and, if we are to obey, if we are to believe, let us have no half-measures. Let us face the ultimate reality, let us see the worst. Man sins, man always has sinned: do you say he can do differently? I tell

you that his life is just as much bound up in the universal life as the movements of the atoms and their attractions. Struggle as he will, he cannot help it. And yet he suffers, yet he is accounted guilty, yet he is to be condemned eternally for that which he cannot help. Unjust, you say? Yes. So I feel, for I am a man; and yet this Word says so. God says so. God made the world, made us. Why did he do it? I do not know. I only declare the fact. I only speak to you as the man of science speaks in bringing together the result of his study. He says this is so. You ask him why: he says, 'I do not know, no man knows why.' And yet we know God is just, and base our life on that. It is better to believe that than to doubt it. So I believe that beneath this great injustice, this apparent unreasonableness, there is the reason and justice that is infinite." Such was the word of Calvinism. Do you wonder that men who believed that conquered half Europe? Do you wonder that men who believed that were not afraid of what King Philip and his inquisition could do? They had already

faced the very darkest side of things, and yet they believed; and, though reason protested, though the heart bled, yet they trusted God. Do you think it was an easy thing for Jonathan Edwards to preach that terrible sermon on "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God"? You say, when you read it, "What a hard-hearted man he was!" I say rather what a brave man he was, who, believing that, dared say it, and say it simply because to him it was true.

Such was Calvinism when it was not a creed to be coolly revised, but was received as a statement of the ultimate realities of existence. It was not a bugbear to fright the ignorant, but a pitiless deduction from universally accepted premises. The Calvinist differed from other Christians of the day only in that his logic was more inexorable. He saw and stated all that is involved in the evangelical scheme of salvation. As long as the fundamental assumptions of this scheme were unquestioned, Calvinism ruled over the best minds of the world.

Weak men and women would say, "Oh,

but it is not pleasant, it is not beautiful, it is not popular." "We go with religion," Bunyan's man of the world would say, "when she walks in the sunshine in her silver slippers." "Nay," said Christian and Hopeful, "we go with religion in all weathers, and wait not for wind and tide." These were the men who walked through the Valley of Humiliation, and who found a key that unlocked at last for them even the dungeon of Giant Despair, who saw the worst that human thought could give, who faced that which made weaker men despair, and yet found hope and courage even to the end.

And this seriousness of Calvinism which made it a power is seen in the kind of questions which Calvinism asked. The most characteristic work of Calvinism, and that which remains longest, is the Shorter Catechism of the Westminster divines. Many of the answers to that catechism are strangely obsolete now. They no longer commend themselves to the kind of minds that made that catechism, but commend themselves rather to those who are blind to

the facts of the present day. But the questions remain, and the questions have been the power which have made Calvinism potent among thinking men. It is not easy to ask great questions; and much of church religion has often consisted in evading great questions rather than in asking them. Not so with Calvinism. The questions of the Westminster Catechism are the questions of the Sphinx. They voice the eternal questionings of the soul of man: they challenge the intellect of the ages. It is because the questions were so great that the answers no longer satisfy. "What is the chief end of man? What is God? What are the decrees of God? How doth God execute his decrees? What is effectual calling?"

Think what it meant for generations of men to be confronted with such questions. Other forms of religion may be uninfluenced by scientific discoveries, because they do not occupy a field wherein they can come in conflict with serious thought. But Calvinism in its solemn truth-telling cannot evade the issue which new truth brings.

The man who asks, "What is the chief end of man?" has asked the fundamental question of ethics. He cannot but be influenced by every step in ethical development. He who to-day asks, "How doth God execute his decrees?" cannot be indifferent to what natural science has to say on the subject. The great influence of Calvinism has been to set men thinking. It has given them the courage of their convictions. It has exalted logic, and accustomed men to use it in religion. We need not then be surprised that, where Calvinism has been most intense, the old Calvinistic creed has at length broken down. It is the spirit bursting the bonds of its forms. So Calvin's Geneva has long been the seat of liberalism, and the new theology gained its first triumphs in Puritan Boston. Nothing could be wider apart than the answers of Emerson from those of the Westminster divines; but the questionings are the same. Like a true child of the Calvinists, he is still pondering

> "The fate of the man-child,
> The meaning of man."

And, when the old answers do not satisfy, he does not turn away, but waits in reverent silence.

> "Alway it asketh, asketh;
> And each answer is a lie.
> . . . . . .
> Ask on, thou clothed eternity;
> Time is the false reply."

As in Bunyan we have Calvinism in the flesh, so in these lines we have Calvinism as a disembodied spirit. The solid mass of dogma has dissolved; but, in its place, we recognize a certain spiritual attitude and expectation. The soul of the old faith remains. It has learned the meekness of wisdom through its past disappointments, but it has lost nothing of its serious purpose. Baffled for the time in its attempts to solve the mystery of its own destiny, it loses nothing of heart or hope, but still believes that eternity contains the answers to the eternal questionings of the heart.

We may trace the influence of the austere discipline of Calvinism upon all the great religious leaders of our time. Its good is "a good diffused." Here, rather than in

the professedly Calvinistic churches, we may follow the line of spiritual succession; for it would seem that the brave old spirit has in our day almost forsaken its old tenements. The recent attempts made to revise the Westminster Confession are significant, for they betray the full extent of the ecclesiastical degeneracy. To soften here and there a phrase, to conceal the full force of an argument, to leave vague some harsh deduction from an admitted premise, to evade a difficulty rather than to squarely meet it, to seek plausibility rather than reality, these are congenial tasks for Mr. By-ends of Fair Speech and his good friends, Mr. Smooth-man, Mr. Facing-both-ways, and Mr. Anything. For compromise with principle comes naturally to Mr. By-ends, as he tells us, "My great-grandfather was a waterman, looking one way and rowing another; and I got most of my estate by the same occupation." But this fits not the temper of the man with the burden on his back and the book in his hand. By sad experience, he has learned to distrust easy solutions of great problems, and hastens on

through the difficult to the true. "Then Christian and Hopeful outwent them again, and went on till they came to a delicate plain called Ease, where they went through with much content; but that plain was but narrow, so they were quickly got over it."

He who has caught the spirit of the old Calvinism will not linger long on the "delicate plain," where churchmen are engaged in smoothing down a creed which at heart they have ceased to believe. The only question for him is, Is it true? If it is, let it be preached in its integrity, nor let its sternest outlines be concealed. Let the whole counsel of God be proclaimed without equivocation. But, if it is not found true, when subjected to the severest tests, let us hasten onward, no matter what valleys of humiliation or hills of difficulty or doubting castles may await us.

And all of us must catch this spirit if we would enter into the heritage which the men of old have left us. We may not share their doctrines; but, if we would do our part, we must share their sincerity and earnestness. The old problems come to us

in different forms, and our answers must be in different phraseology. But of one thing we may be certain, and that is that only when we face our problems with a courage as indomitable as that of the early Calvinists will any worthy answer be possible.

The world has yet work for men who, facing the worst, yet believe in the best, and who, looking up to the Eternal, can say, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust him." The world needs men who believe in their own "effectual calling" to do God's work, and who are willing to do it in obedience to those great laws which are not of their own making. The religion of the future will be more humane, more tender, more rational, than the old Calvinism; but it must not be less earnest and devoted.

METHODISM

III.

METHODISM

THE inhabitants of the valleys of Southern California, when asked to tell us the reason for their climatic blessedness, give equal credit to the mountains and the sea. The great ranges that lie behind, they tell us, cut off the chilly breezes of the north, and the warm ocean currents temper the winter air.

We have already considered one of the causes which have modified the religious climate of our age. It is that rugged mountain range that lies behind us, which we call Calvinism. Let us now consider what we owe to that warm ocean current which is known as Methodism.

To understand Methodism, we must go back to its beginning. Let us go into the middle of the eighteenth century, and enter the parish church of Epworth. The curate

is preaching on a very popular theme of that day, "The Evils of Enthusiasm." As the congregation goes out of the church, it is whispered that the son of the former minister, who, being suspected of the sin of enthusiasm, is forbidden the use of his father's pulpit, is to preach that evening in the churchyard.

What follows let John Wesley himself tell: "That evening at six o'clock I came and found such a congregation as I believe Epworth never saw before. I stood near the east end of the church upon my father's tombstone, and I cried aloud, 'The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.' . . . As I preached, on every side as with one accord they lifted up their voices and cried aloud. Several dropped down as dead; but many soon lifted up their heads with joy and broke into thanksgiving, assured that now they had the desire of their souls, even the forgiveness of sins." A strange phenomenon that to the good curate, and clearly against the peace and dignity of the Church of England; for,

if the kingdom of heaven is not meat and drink, or at least is not intended principally as a means of providing meat and drink for the reverend clergy and their families, then there must be something wrong with the Church of England, then the kingdom of heaven must be something different from the Church, — an idea not to be allowed. It was the age when Jonathan Swift was the dean of St. Patrick's and when the Rev. Laurence Sterne divided his time between writing sermons and his "Sentimental Journey," and when Fielding found in too many a country parish models for his earthly-minded parson, Trulliber. It was, in short, in the very middle of the great enlightened eighteenth century, — a time when it was understood that religion henceforth was to be tolerated; but it was not to be treated any longer as an elemental force, but as an elegant though a somewhat tiresome conventionality.

On one point all sensible men were agreed, — that there should be no enthusiasm in religion. One great commandment overshadowed all else: "Let all things be done

decently and in order." Next to this was another great commandment: "The Powers that be are ordained of God." The Church was the patient Griselda married to the State, and she must have no will of her own. The brave old text about the gospel being "the power of God" was not often quoted, nor was it much believed.

One of the popular sermons of the day, published by a certain London doctor of divinity, has this title: "The Nature, Folly, Sin, and Danger of being Righteous Overmuch." The intellect of the Church was then engaged largely in discussing the "evidences of Christianity," but it is characteristic of the time that these evidences were all in the past. It never seemed to enter the heads of these wise churchmen that religion might possibly be self-evidencing. The evidences were all documentary. Long ago miracles happened, it was believed; and God spake to men, and then ceased to speak. Now faith consists in accepting the testimony of the Fathers as it has been preserved for us in the Church. Fielding tells us of the religion of Chaplain

Thwackum, and of his arguments with the heretic, Square, and he says the clergyman "decided everything by authority; but he always used the Scriptures as the lawyer doth his Coke upon Littleton, where the comment is of equal authority with the text."

It was into this age that John Wesley came, and with him the phenomenon of Methodism. Beginning in a little band in Oxford, it spread soon over the United Kingdom and the world. Men were astonished to find that in religion the age of miracles had not passed, that still in lowliest men and women there was something, call it faith, call it what you will, which responded to the man speaking with that greatest of all authority,— the authority of an inward conviction of the truth of his own message. The one thing which was greatly characteristic of Methodism, and which differentiated it from the religion of the time, was not its doctrine. Wesley had no new doctrine to preach. Such doctrine as he did preach was in many respects less advanced than the best thought of his time. He believed in witches, and was sur-

rounded all the time by a supernatural atmosphere. His teachings were often narrow, and not adapted to the very finest minds; but his power lay in this,—that he had grasped, and as no other man in England had grasped, the idea that religion is not a doctrine at all, not something to be held apart from the man, but it is the power of a personality consciously touched by the Eternal. He preached the necessity of a personal experience of religion. According to the scheme of Calvinism, the destiny of the soul was determined in the councils of eternity before the foundation of the world; and the individual must wait till the far judgment day before he can surely know what his destiny is. To Wesley the past and future eternities were crowded into one decisive moment. In that moment the man might choose God and enjoy him. He need not wait for death in order to enter heaven, nor for the judgment day to be sure of his salvation. The whole gospel is translated into the present tense. All the divine promises may be verified by an act of consciousness.

For its emphasis upon feeling Methodism has been criticised, and to a certain extent justly. Its introspection has sometimes been morbid, and its desire for personal salvation has sometimes been selfish.

But at heart Wesley was right. When he came back from his ill-starred voyage to America, whither he went to convert the Indians, he said that the one result of it all was to convince him that, whereas he had gone forth to convert the Indians, he had not been converted himself. Wesley was right in thinking that no man can help others any further than he has himself been helped. No man can give to others any higher religion than he has himself experienced. He may talk about it, preach about it, define it, but never can he help another soul to any higher level than that on which he himself stands; and, in seeing this, Wesley differed from all the self-complacent parsons of England, who imagined that by preaching the articles of their Church and living as they pleased they were doing God's work, and were his ministers.

But, though it began in introspection,

Methodism has been eminently social in its development. Wesley grasped the thought that righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost might spread through a whole nation as by contagion. The first thing was to find some faithful souls who, though they might not be able to define religion, had experienced it. These men he commissioned; and they went up and down through England, to the coal mines and the furnaces, to all places where men were herded together, and told what God had done for them. And rude hearts were touched, and vast multitudes responded to the word of faith. This miracle happened in England a century ago, and the influence of that great revival has spread through all the world. There is not a corner of the civilized world that has not been touched by this new manifestation of Christianity.

What do we owe to Methodism? That is a hard question to answer. Much easier would it be to answer the other question, What do we not owe to Methodism? Methodism in the churches which Wesley founded, or rather which grew unintention-

ally out of those simple societies which he established, is the most powerful ecclesiastical organization to-day in Protestantism, the one most full of vitality. But these Methodist societies are simply as the wire along which the electric energy travels; but the energy which charged that wire is too great for it to carry, and so it has found other conductors, and it has touched all churches, all organizations of the religious world. Even our Unitarian churches have been astonished and transformed when it has touched them with a new idea of what liberal Christianity may be. New England Unitarianism is simply a developed Calvinism, coming from a people characterized by the Calvinistic temper, seeking first for an opinion, a clear statement, rather than an experience. When we wish to broaden out, we broaden out according to the Calvinistic method, by trying to revise our statements. We follow in our development of liberalism intellectual lines. The text we love most is, "The truth shall make you free." A great text that; for the truth does make us free, if we follow it far enough. But it is

a long way sometimes. A minister came to the family of Jonathan Edwards. When he went away, he said, "I suspect that Mrs. Edwards has found a shorter way to heaven than her husband." So I suspect that Methodism finds a shorter way to true liberalism than the intellectual way which the Calvinist, by inheritance or by creed, must of necessity follow. "The truth shall make you free," is a great text; but here is an equally great one: "Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." There is liberty without defining it. There is liberty as a fact and as an experience. We Unitarians hardly knew what the possibilities of genial, warm-loving fellowship were until the Methodist Robert Collyer came among us.

The liberal ministers of Boston preached long and well against intolerance, showing how unscriptural and how unreasonable it was. And at length the old dogmatism burst its shell; but it was, like the opening of the chestnut burr, accelerated by frost. But the ejaculatory prayer of Father Taylor, "Lord, save us from bigotry and bad

rum: thou knowest which is worse," was more effective than all their arguments. That was characteristic of Methodism. The word of Wesley was, "Preach not against opinions, but against sins." When a Methodist comes to see that bigotry is a sin, he fights against it in the same fervent, whole-souled way in which he fights against bad rum.

The influence of Methodism was powerful in making the great political and social revolution that was inevitable in England a peaceful one. A writer in the early part of this century laments the fact that Methodism taught the working classes the secret of organized effort. Its class meetings were training-schools for the trades-unions. In this social education we now see a great work for good.

The eighteenth century felt beneath all its conventionality the incoming of a great wave. In France, where religion had lost its force, the wave came on, and broke in terror on the land.

Go to England at that same time, and you see many of the same conditions. The

working class has become conscious of itself. Great multitudes, thirty thousand sometimes in one place, come together to listen to the popular orators. But who are the orators of the mob, and what are they saying? They are men of faith; and they are preaching not the rights of man, but the duties of men. In the presence of these great duties all social distinctions fade away; and the sentiment of equality and fraternity springs up of necessity. There must be liberty, too; but these preachers say it must come through the means of a strict discipline, for it is freedom from sin that is desired. It was strange doctrine to preach to a mob, but it was believed. "Be ye perfect as God is perfect." And it was true doctrine; for only through perfect manhood can perfect freedom come. The age of the rights of man must come. There must be Chartism and reform bills and the long struggle for social privilege; but was it not a great thing that so many people grew into a consciousness of their own rights through their new consciousness of God? It is a great debt that we owe to

Methodism for its work in preparing the way for the new government by the people. There is not time to follow the ramifications of its influence. It has been influential in the abolition of slavery, in the work of prison reform and of universal education. It has been a power coming from the masses of the people, and making not only for larger rights, but for larger means of grace. It has developed the true fellowship, which is the actual grasping of the brother's hand, and not the mere talking about it.

As to Methodism as an organic fact, what shall I say? Only this,—that it is something which is so good that one cannot help wondering why it is not better. It is a great treasure which is in earthen vessels, but the trouble is that people are apt to value the vessels more than the treasure. Wesley had all the defects of his qualities and the limitations which belong to a popular leader. The Methodist discipline contains much that is petty and irritating, and which almost makes us forget how glorious is the spirit behind it. With all his

abounding humanity, Wesley did not reach all sorts and conditions of men. When he went to Scotland, he found the people not so easily influenced as the more ignorant congregations in England. There is something pathetic in his lamentations in his old age over what seemed to him the spiritual decline of his societies. As people grew well-to-do, they were less easily moved than when they first listened to him on the moors. After preaching to a certain congregation, he says: "Many of them were gay, genteel people. I was out of their depth. Oh, how hard it is to be shallow enough for a polite audience!" One feels a certain truth in this; for he appealed to the elemental forces, which lie deeper than anything which the polite audience had felt. Yet it reminds us of the naïve confession of the Hebrew chronicler: "And the Lord was with Judah, and he drave out the inhabitants of the hill country; and he could not drive out the inhabitants of the valleys, because they had chariots of iron."

The "gay, genteel people," shallow as may be their habitual thoughts, have souls

also, as preachers like Savonarola have found; and men of intellectual strength and poise need the ministry of religion, also. If Wesley did not reach them, it is to be attributed, not to the depth of his religious experience, but to the narrowness of his religious philosophy. And so my praise of Methodism must have some serious abatements. Says Thomas Carlyle, "Is not serene or complete religion the highest aspect of human nature, as serene cant or complete no-religion is the lowest and the miserablest, between which two all manner of earnest Methodisms, introspections, agonizing inquiries, never so morbid, play their respective parts, not without approbation?"

But, while we give approbation to actual Methodism, it is with something more than approbation, with hearty faith and reverence, that we speak of that ideal Methodism that it foreshadows.

The new Methodism will cast aside what was morbid in its old inquiries and what was unreal in its experiences, but it will not give up its idea of religion as an experience. It will cry aloud, "Ye must be

born again, and again, and again!" It will still emphasize those great moments when the light flashes in through "the east windows of divine surprise." The experiences of religion will be repeated till they become as manifold as life itself.

And the new Methodism will so interpret Wesley's doctrine of perfect sanctification that it will come to mean nothing less than the fulfilment of manhood. For Wesley's emphasis was right. Before his time religious teachers had talked most about justification, which was the removal of the penalties of sin. Wesley said that the main thing was the removal of the sin itself. The new Methodism will see that the perfect life is not to be found through the magic of a single experience, but it will all the more fervently preach that the one object of all effort should be to obtain it. And it will find no more inspiring words to guide it than those of Wesley: "Finally, I preach that, being justified by faith, we taste of that heaven towards which we are going; and we tread down sin and fear, and sit in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

RATIONALISM

IV.

RATIONALISM

THE types of Christianity which we have thus far considered have been manifested in certain historical organizations. But there are two principles which are found in all churches, rationalism and mysticism.

By rationalism is here meant the principle of common sense, or, if you will, the scientific method applied to religion. The rationalist does not recognize the authority of any book or church. He appeals to observation and experiment. He pleads for perfect freedom of thought, and denies the sinfulness of doubt.

To ask what rationalism, the trust in human understanding, the method of experiment and observation, has done for civilization, would be asking altogether too great a question to be answerd here. When Mr.

Lecky sought to write the history of rationalism in Europe, he found that in reality he was writing the history of modern civilization; for every step in the progress of civilization has been a step made possible by the method of science. One by one old superstitions have faded away in this growing light. One by one the obstacles in the path of freedom have been brushed aside. To tell what rationalism has done for man would be to tell how the dark nightmare of persecution has passed away, how all the horrid dreams of witchcraft have ceased, and how out of the dark ages of mankind has come the new age in which we live. All free government is the result of the determination of men to use bravely those faculties with which they have been endowed, to follow absolutely the necessary laws of thought which they have discovered. And so the old ecclesiastical authority wanes, and the new authority of reason takes its place. But what has rationalism done for Christianity itself? Here we ask a question where there may be a difference in opinion. There are those who look

upon this growth of the reasoning power in religion as the death of Christianity, or, at least, the prophecy of its swift decay. Was not Christianity born in ignorance? Was it not cradled in miracle? Has not its whole course been through superstitions which have faded away in a larger light? And, when this power which has destroyed so much has done its perfect work, shall not Christianity itself become only a memory?

In order to answer the question what rationalism has done for Christianity, one must inquire further as to what this scientific method of which we speak is capable of doing, and what are its natural limitations. When any new power comes into play, it is apt to be looked upon with a superstitious fear and a superstitious hope. So it is with liberty, constitutional and religious. So it is with this power which we call Science. We print it with capital letters, and then we bow down and worship it. And there are those who imagine that the time is coming when the old religions of the world will altogether cease; and I

hear it sometimes said that, if we are but patient, we shall see the creation of a new religion, which will be the religion of science.

It is imagined that all that men have experienced in the past may be looked upon as a delusion, and the historic growths of religion be brushed aside; and then that through an act of pure reasoning, through the exercise of scientific intelligence, we may make for ourselves a new religion, which shall be adequate to all our wants. There are some who look forward with great joy and hope to this new creation; and there are others, followers of the old gods, who look with terror upon the possibility. It seems to me that both the hope and the terror are alike unreasonable, almost absurd. Science never created anything, has no power to make anything. Nothing was ever created by reasoning about it or comparing it with something else, or by classifying it; and science is but a method of classification, of comparison, of definition, and, in the very nature of the case, a thing must exist before it can be defined. What

would you think of one who should say: "Life thus far has been interesting enough, but not complete. It has existed in very poor forms, a struggling, weak thing, coming upward by slow degrees through the ages. By and by we shall be so advanced that all this will be done away; and biology will be so developed that we shall have a biological life which will be superior to anything we have seen before." You say at once that the biologist claims nothing of the sort. He simply sees life, tries to understand it, tries to trace its origin, and, if possible, foretell its course. That is all. He accepts the fact that is offered to him, and so his science has its justification; but no biologist could ever invent life or create it. Long ago, when natural science, like everything else, was enveloped in superstition, a man would bring to his scientific friend, the alchemist, a bit of base metal, and would say "Here, good alchemist, is this which I bring, and now I ask you to make me some gold." And the alchemist, the superstitious man of science, would try to fulfil that impossible demand.

Not so does the miner to-day come to the assayer. He brings his ore; and he says: "Here is the ore which I have found in the earth. Now I ask you to tell me how much gold is in it." And the assayer, having the fact presented to him, can give some estimate as to its value. Now, in just such a relation must religion stand to science. By no possible reasoning could any man invent it or create it. If there is such a thing as a science of religion, it presupposes the fact that religion, more or less perfect, already exists. That which is presented to the philosopher and the critic is a certain great fact of experience.

It is a fact manifested in all human life, — manifested most of all, Jesus said, where it was most unconscious. The kingdom of heaven he found in the nature of a little child. And so he placed the little child in the midst of his disciples, and said: "This is what I mean to teach you. There is a secret hidden from the wise and the prudent, but revealed in that child's nature. Tell me what that child's nature means, what is implied in it, what may be de-

veloped from it, and then I will tell you what I mean by the kingdom of heaven." So in its very simplest forms religion presents itself to us as a fact to be recognized and explained. It is a fact just as much as any fact of natural science, though infinitely more wonderful. It is a fact that men in the midst of the meanest surroundings and living the most imperfect lives have yet looked up toward the heavens, and wondered and worshipped. It is a fact which we find in the earliest words of our old Aryan languages. When two thoughts were brought together,—the thought of that which was nearest and of that which is vastest and most remote,—the primitive shepherds prayed to the Sky-father. They somehow felt that the universe was their Father's house. How did they come to have that feeling? How did they come to worship and to love, and at length bring their worship and their love together? How did the mystery of the world touch them with hope and faith? Our knowledge of the world, our actual science, may do much. It divides between the things

we know and the things we do not know beyond; but, when it has done that, it has not created religion or accounted for it. You tell me that we do not know so much of that unseen world as our fathers have dreamed of. Very well; but that is not the question of religion. The question is this: How comes it that before the unknown men have stood and do stand to-day in a religious attitude,—that is, in an attitude of hope and of reverence and instinctive trust? You tell me that you will wait till religion shall be placed, as we say, upon a scientific basis, before you will believe in religion, when the very fact is that that which challenges our science is just this: that men have been so constituted as to worship the invisible, and believe that the things they do not see are even greater than the things they know. What would you say of one who, in the beginning of a battle, should say: "I will not enter into this fight until you place my courage upon a scientific basis. I will act the coward until you prove to me that the victory is mine, and that I will come out un-

scathed from the conflict?" Ah! you know that courage is something more than that, and something diviner. Courage means that the man takes his chances, that he gives himself to some high quest, that, without waiting for an answer, he challenges the unknown, and goes to battle with joy. That is the very essence of courage, that it outruns the sober understanding; and that is the meaning of love. And that is the meaning of hope, as Paul said,— "Hope that is seen is not hope." Hope that can be scientifically verified is not that thing which elevates the man above the beast. It is that diviner power so full of significance that no philosophy has ever fathomed its meaning. Hope, love, trust, courage, all that is divinest in the human soul,— these are the facts to which we refer. These are facts which have appeared among men before they began to reason about life or about thought or about conscience. These form part of that kingdom of heaven which is in the heart of every child.

When one comes to think of religion as being something which we find most divine

in human life, and the existence of which is verified by universal experience, we neither look for a new religion to be created by some scientific process or to be destroyed by it. We do look for the growing knowledge of man to more and more separate that which is eternal and valuable, that which is intrinsically religious, from that which is untrue. We look to science to do here what it does everywhere, — not to create, but to define and to classify the facts which already exist. Now, I think we are prepared somewhat to answer the question as to what rationalism, the free use of our reasoning faculties, has done and is doing for Christianity.

Rationalism has helped Christianity by purifying it, by taking away those things which do not and never have in reality belonged to it, thus rendering it possible to believe in it and to see what it really is. And rationalism has done more than that. It has invested Christianity with a dignity and a meaning which it never had before. Have you ever noticed that the least interesting lives of any great religious teachers

or saints have been those which have been written by their intimate followers, their uncritical disciples? I remember the delight with which I first read Mrs. Oliphant's "Life of Saint Francis." It was written from a Protestant standpoint, and yet brought a living picture of that beautiful childlike spirit of the old time. It kindled in my mind a desire to know more about the saint, and I borrowed from a Catholic friend one of the standard Catholic lives, and I tried to read; but, alas! my saint was not there, or shall I say he was there, but cruelly concealed from me? Instead of that simple, beautiful life, I read of all sorts of vulgar miracles and prodigies attributed to him; and that which made me love him most, that was the thing which his disciple least saw. Is not that true in regard to all religious history? Is not that true in regard to the history of Jesus of Nazareth himself? Even when we go to those earliest Gospels, we find something like that. We doubt whether those who wrote those Gospels dwelt most with loving emphasis on the story of the Master with

the little children in his arms, or whether it might not have seemed still more divine to them that this man was wonderful enough to blast the fig-tree by a mere word or to send the devils into the herd of swine. We have to use our critical faculties at every stage of the history before it yields its spiritual meaning and beauty. When Sir Edwin Arnold gave us "The Light of Asia," we felt as if we would all like to be Buddhists. This religion of India is so beautiful, so tender, when we are allowed to see its heart. But we are likely to be disappointed when we go to the Buddhist interpreters, for the pure light is hidden under trivial commentaries. And, when the poet turned from "The Light of Asia" to "The Light of the World," did we not feel that he helped us to understand Christianity, — that that life of the Master in Galilee was more beautiful than we had thought, when we saw it through our theological preconceptions? And then you ask, Why more beautiful? Not because he had added something, but because he had simply brushed away all those horrid thoughts of

an angry God and the bloody atonement, and introduced once more the Jesus of the Beatitudes. That is the method not simply of poetry, but of rationalism. For rationalism is the assertion of the right to choose among the things handed down to us those which commend themselves to our understanding.

There is no way in which religion more surely loses its ground than in the mistaken attempt to shut out this rationalistic and critical spirit from the teaching of religion. Just after the Reformation the Jesuits gained control of the education of the youth in France. "Let us have the children and youth," they said, "and we do not care what becomes of the men." The result of their method has been that the average Frenchman at some time or other has come under the influence of a narrow type of Christianity; and then, as he becomes a man, he grows beyond all that, and looks upon it with the most supreme contempt. Protestants are often doing the same thing here in America. The careful religious parent would have his son receive a liberal

education, but he would have him learn nothing that shall in the least way enlarge or alter his religious faith. And so he founds his denominational college, where there shall be liberal education on every possible subject but religion. The result you see in the wide-spread contempt of those who graduate from institutions where this policy prevails for all that belongs to religion. It is inevitable from the nature of the mind. Here is the boy taught in the home and in the Sunday-school that religion, by which is meant his form of religion, is the greatest thing in the world, and because of that he worships. We cannot worship anything but the greatest. It is the heart's homage to the highest, the broadest, and the truest. And then he goes to school and to college, and he learns many things. This world, which he has been taught to despise, is much more wonderful than he had imagined, so full of interest, so rich in meaning. And in this wonderful world everything is related to every other thing, for there are great laws running through all. He comes to feel the

interest which every developed mind has in every fact which is related to the life of the universe. The veriest bit of stone has its history. The blade of grass tells its story of the past, and gives its prophecy of the future. All of these things belong to one great order,— the great order of the universe. He comes to have little interest in any unrelated fact,— any fact that does not tell of some law behind it. And he finds no fact which has not such relations, except the fact of his religion. This seems to stand absolutely alone. It is no longer the greatest thing in the world to him, when he has learned of the wonders of natural law, the miracles of which he is told do not seem so incredible as trivial. All secular history is a mighty unfolding. It strikes awe into his soul. But the history of religion, as he has been taught it, seems altogether finite, beginning a certain number of many centuries ago,— not like life itself, going clear back to the beginning and involved in the necessity of things, nor like physical power, inevitable and eternal. No correlation of forces here, no comparison

with kindred forms, but something stern and fixed and limited. He is told that religion consists in believing certain things which are said to have happened, but for which there is little proof. Its apostolic succession is limited to some little line in history, and is not a great stream flowing from everlasting to everlasting. All is so small and so inadequate. And, being trained thus, he simply becomes indifferent to religious thought. He does not take it seriously any longer.

To such a mind rationalism brings salvation. Rationalism teaches that religion is not an isolated fact, not a fact of one nation or of one simple stream of history, not something that is accidental or artificial, but is just as inevitable as life. Indeed, it is life, the life of the soul. It teaches that this religion that he has learned at his mother's knee was simply one ray from the central sun, one throb of the pulse of the world, one little glimpse of that which is absolute and eternal. Always men have been religious, always something within the heart has been striving for better things;

and the best religion is akin to the worst religion, as the highest life is akin to the lowest. The Christ himself but interprets the heart of humanity, if he is the desire of all nations. And rationalism not only teaches this, but teaches that that which most repelled him did not belong to the essence of religion, but was the obstacle which it must overcome as it grows toward perfection. And so many a thing which once seemed sacred to him he casts aside, because the truth of things has grown more sacred and more divine to him.

The very beauty and the sanctity of religion make it necessary for us always to allow free play to that criticism which alone keeps it pure. In one of his noblest sonnets Shakspere tells us that it is the most beautiful soul which needs to be most watchful of itself, lest things foul and false take shelter there.

"Oh, what a mansion have these vices got
Which for their habitation chose out thee,
Where beautie's veil doth cover every blot
And all things turn to fair that eyes can see!
Take heed, dear heart, of this large privilege."

So must we say to those Christian churches whose history has been so glorious, and which have been the custodians of such rare grace. Because the beauty of holiness has in such large measure been there, we cannot bear to think that they should afford refuge for a lie. "Take heed, dear heart, of this large privilege."

The final effect of rationalism upon religion must be to make it more truly spiritual. And how is that? you say. Do we not talk of "cold rationalism"? I believe it makes religion more spiritual simply for this reason: that it demonstrates to us that nothing but the spiritual element can abide. Nothing but this will stand the test of the severest examination. Paul writes of these beautiful fruits of the spirit; and then he says, "Against these there is no law." No law of Moses of old, — that was his thought, — no law of nature, no law of the mind, can make these less or different from what they are.

Rationalism, the religion of the understanding, is the John the Baptist preparing the way for the religion of the free spirit.

Its baptism is that of the clear water, washing away old errors. But it prophesies the new baptism of the Holy Ghost and of fire.

Jesus brings together two ideas, which must be united before religion can gain complete power, when he says that men shall worship in spirit and in truth. When we bring severest truth to our worship, it becomes most spiritual. All else shall fade, but here is something that abides. The only faith that can stand the test of reason is a faith that "works by love and purifies the heart."

MYSTICISM

V.

MYSTICISM

IT is somewhat unfortunate that some of the best words, which ought to have the widest significance, are narrowed, accidentally, in their application. Such is the case with the word which I would choose, had it not otherwise been used,— the word "Spiritualist." In its large meaning, a Spiritualist is a man who believes in the things of the spirit, walks according to the spirit, the man who feels the divineness of his own soul, and that it is in touch with the infinite soul of the universe. This good word has been adopted by those who believe in certain forms of intercourse between embodied and disembodied spirits. The word "spiritist" would be the more proper one for this type of thought, leaving the other for the larger meaning. We have, however, one word which has been

actually used to describe this kind of thought and feeling,— the word "mystic." The mystic is one who appeals not primarily as the source of his religion to a book or a church, nor, as does the pure rationalist, to certain arguments and logical processes, but who makes the direct appeal to his own heart. He believes that there is a revelation from the Infinite,— a revelation vouchsafed to every soul in the degree of its purity. And so he listens to hear the voice of the eternal spirit speaking to him. He believes that the great God who made the heavens and the earth dwells within himself, and that, when all is silent, when self is forgotten, and all the passions that disturb the mind are stilled, he becomes conscious of the divine presence. There is a light, he says, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. Most of us do not see that light, still less do walk in it. We love the garish day, and we forget this holy light that might evermore be leading us on. And the height of wisdom, this man says, is not to accumulate vast stores of knowledge, nor to be able to trace from

their beginnings all the great laws and forces of the external universe; but it is the very simplest thing in the world. It is simply the opening of our own eyes. He also says the outward signs of deity are not the strongest. There are intimations which come to every one of us when we are at our highest, which come without the aid of priest or church or ritual, and make us sure that the power from whence we came is divine, is righteousness, is love. Men who have thought thus have not been confined to any one nation or time. All religions have had them. All religions, we may say, began in just this kind of thought, in the minds of men who believed first of all in the intuitions of their own souls. But all religions have tended to forget their origin, to make of this personal touch with the divine and sense of the eternal, a miracle confined to one man, a favorite of Deity, and afterwards to be received on faith. Read the history of Christianity as you find it in its beginning, in the story of Jesus, and you find in this man a pure mystic, a pure Spiritualist,

to whom these finer forces were all. Jesus cared little for the tradition of the religion of his own land. He was bold to say, "Thus said Moses, but *I* say unto you something far different." He cared little for the outward forms of worship as they were held in his day, and told those who came to him that they need not have long prayers, for God did not care for their much speaking. The pure in heart saw God. The little children, in their simplicity, were the wise. As you follow his teachings, you find that they appeal thus directly to the inner light. If that light which is within be darkness, Jesus had nothing more to say. "He that hath ears to hear," he said, "let him hear." "My sheep hear my voice." He had no other proof, no stronger miracle, than the response of heart to heart. By and by Christianity became something different from that pure spiritual influence. The thought of a great church, an external power, what Jesus called the kingdom of this world, dawned upon the minds of his followers. And how could that be supported? How should men be-

lieve when the teachers of Christianity went about teaching doctrines that did not, perhaps, awaken response in the soul? Something external must take the place of this pure spiritual light. And so came systems of theology and of priestcraft, great churches founded not at all upon the appeal to the individual soul, but upon the appeal to outward evidence, and at last to some special miracle. That has been the general history of Christianity, — the making external that which was at the beginning internal and spiritual, the substitution of argument for intuition, and at last the appeal to mere custom and tradition in defence of doctrines which both the heart and the logical faculty reject. And yet, when we thus read the history of Christianity, we are seeing only upon one side. All through these same ages another kind of thought and of feeling has existed. There have been men who have drawn aside from the churches and from the schools, and sought, as the very heart of all religion, the answer to the question, How do I stand in my relation to that great Power from

whence I came? And, then, How do I stand in relation to these my fellow-men about me? What duties do I owe to them? And, then, What light may I see when all about me grows dark? What may I hear when all my friends stand aside and I face the silence of eternity? Many of these men have been looked upon with contempt by the churchmen of their day. But, on the other hand, some of them have been recognized as the spiritual successors of Jesus. They have been called saints, and almost worshipped,— these men who stood alone, thinking their own thoughts. Men have worshipped them, built new churches to their memory, done everything but understand them. These were the mystics, the men of the spirit. All through the dark ages these men abounded, sometimes within the churches, sometimes without them. They did not reject formally the elaborate doctrines of the Catholic Church, but simply ignored them. Seeing something far better, they had little use for the subtleties of the Schoolmen and for the ambitious schemes of ecclesiastics. Mysti-

cal sects were formed whose very names were significant. "The brethren of the free spirit," some of them called themselves, "the brethren of the common life," others, bringing the idea of something far different from that which the Church of their day was striving to effect. So the mystics, Eckhart and Tauler, arose in Germany; and out of that line of silent thinkers and pure worshippers came at length that great book of religion, The "Imitation of Christ,"—a marvellous book, when we think whence it came and when, a book of religion written in the very midst of those ages of scholastic subtlety, and yet not a word of any of the doctrines which the Church of that time esteemed most essential. It may be read to-day by men of every faith, and has been the constant companion of many who have cast aside traditional Christianity. It breathes nothing but the purest, tenderest sympathy for all, and the finest hope for humanity. It teaches a religion which seems fitted to be universal. It is strange how many of the doctrines which entangled the reason

of men were broken through so easily by those men who lived in the spirit. That great doctrine which has cast such darkness over the universe, eternal punishment, faded away before the clear vision of most of the old mystics. It was something with which they had nothing to do any longer, now that they had learned that God is love.

In an age when the walls of churches were covered with pictures showing the torments of the lost, we read of Heinrich Suso, whom the people called "the minnesinger of the love of God." When Master Eckhart spoke of an endless hell, he said, "It is the Nothingness that burns eternally." To the scholastic teachers religion was a prim garden, well walled about; but the mystics loved to picture it as a sweet wilderness. "The spiritual life," writes one of them, "may fitly be called a wilderness by reason of the many sweet flowers which spring up and flourish, when they are not trodden under foot of men. In this wilderness are the lilies of chastity and the white roses of innocence, and there are the red roses of sacrifice. In this wilder-

ness, too, may we find the violets of meekness, and many other fair flowers and wholesome roots. In this wilderness shalt thou choose thyself a pleasant spot wherein to dwell."

The Reformation divided Christendom along intellectual lines, but the spiritual succession remained unbroken. In the Catholic Church Molinos and Fénelon and Madame Guyon added new chapters to the "Imitation of Christ." On the other hand, Luther was powerfully influenced by the German mystics, as Wesley was afterwards. A number of Protestant sects were formed according to the mystical ideal of piety. The Moravians sought to re-establish primitive Christianity, with its quiet walk with God and its blessing upon the peacemakers, the sons of God. So the society of Friends, casting aside all mere ecclesiasticism, found a deep source of consolation and strength in a life of simplicity and unselfishness. They sought to keep the soul open to intimations from above; and, when no words came, they learned to worship in reverent silence. Another development of

mystical Christianity is seen in the Church of the New Jerusalem. Immanuel Swedenborg did not always distinguish between the pure intuitions of humanity and the pictures of his own imagination, yet he has much for all those who would walk in the spirit.

And modern liberalism, in the midst of all its new doubts, has been saved from arid denials by the infusion of the mystical element. When old ideas of revelation have failed, men have listened to the fresh revelation in their own souls. In America the spiritual possibilities of free thought were illustrated in the Transcendental movement. Though it was associated with a phase of philosophy which was transitory, the deeper influences of Transcendentalism remain as permanent forces in our life.

In Emerson we find the mystical and rationalistic elements united. He was at once a seer and a critic. In this perfect union of the intuitive and logical faculties lies the possibility of a free religion. He himself says, "What one man is said to learn by experience, a man of extraordinary

sagacity is said without experience to divine. The Arabians say that Abul Khain, the mystic, and Abu Ali Seena, the philosopher, conferred together; and, on parting, the philosopher said, 'All that he sees I know,' and the mystic said, 'All that he knows I see.'" When we ask what mysticism has done for religion, we must answer that it has given rise to all religions. The fountain-head is always found in some pure heart. The intuition comes before the argument. Jesus interprets the silence of eternity by his own love before Paul develops his system of theology. Men are born into the spiritual life before they begin to discuss the theory of regeneration. It is not true, as Robert Burns wrote, that "churches are built to please the priests." Churches and priesthoods come into existence to preserve the vision which some saintly soul has seen. They serve as a copy and shadow of the heavenly things, even as Moses is warned of God, when he is about to make the tabernacle, "See that thou make it according to the pattern shewed thee on the mount."

The temple and cathedral are meaningless piles of stone when the spirit that built them has fled.

> "It is not the wall of stone without
> That makes the building small or great,
> But the soul's light shining round about
> And the faith that overcometh doubt
> And the love that is stronger than hate."

And, as the purely spiritual element is that which creates a religon, it is also that which reforms it. The inner light flashes upon the outward abuses, and shows their real hideousness. As we read the journal of that plain Quaker, John Woolman, we are surprised to find how much he saw that was hidden from the statesmen and divines of his day. He had but one standard by which to judge, that of universal righteousness. The slaveholders quoted their texts, and brought forward their special pleas. But, before he would discuss the justice of their cause, he must ask a more searching question, "Do you desire nothing but justice?" And, when all motives of self-interest were eliminated, it was seen that the question was too plain for argument.

This is the secret which the pure in heart have learned: that the problems of life may be easily solved if we are only willing first to reduce them to their simplest terms. Our practical mistakes come largely from our own selfishness and love of ease and lack of sympathy. Purified from these, the mind becomes a mirror reflecting back the truth of things. "He that is spiritual judgeth all things." There are voices which speak out of the silence, and which are not to be gainsaid.

"They send me challenges to right,
And loud rebuke my ill;
They ring my bells of victory,
They breathe my 'Peace, be still!'
They ever seem to say: My child,
Why seek me so all day?
Now journey inward to thyself
And listen by the way."

It is a superficial view which sees in the search for inner purity and peace only a selfish retreat from the hard conflict of life. It is rather the way to gain strength for that conflict. "For their sakes," said Jesus, "I sanctify myself." When a great

wrong is to be righted, there is need for that high courage which is born of spiritual insight. In the battle there must be some Sir Galahad who can say,—

> "My strength is as the strength of ten,
> Because my heart is pure."

In our busy, self-confident age, when there is a tendency to believe only in what is external, we sadly need a revival of the old pieties. We cannot get along without those fruits of the spirit which grow in the sheltered gardens of the interior life. To be alert, eager, curious, this, we say, is to be alive. Yet it is only part of life. And many a man who prides himself on his knowledge of the world is a stranger to himself. He fears no foe but solitude. With feverish haste, he undertakes new works, reads, perhaps, many books, so that he may not have time to think. Never in all his life has he turned aside to learn what the silence may have to teach him. To such a man "knowledge comes, but wisdom lingers."

To most of us there comes a time as to

George Eliot's Maggie Tulliver, when she took up the book of Thomas à Kempis with "a wide, hopeless yearning for something, whatever it is, that is the greatest and best thing in the world."

Let us give thanks for the lesson which all the men of the spirit teach us: that the greatest and best is also the nearest, and that the way to find it is by the path of simplicity. Simplicity of purpose leads one to work with God for things that are eternal. Simplicity of thought leads one to seize directly the truths that are most important. Simplicity of feeling leaves no room for distracting jealousy or envy. "Blessed are the simple-hearted," says the old saint in his cloister; "for they shall enjoy great peace."

And not in the cloister only, but by multitudes amid the stress and strain of life, has this beatitude been verified. Everywhere love finds love, and simple trust lays hold on eternal truth. For indeed "there is something in the soul above the soul, divine, simple, not to be named."

THE
UNITY OF CHRISTENDOM

VI.

THE UNITY OF CHRISTENDOM

WE have considered some of the different types of Christianity. The time has now come for us to take our bearings, and see to what point we have been irresistibly led. One conclusion seems to be forced upon us, and that is that the word "Christian" has a larger significance than most Christian people are willing to allow. It has been the custom for each sect to make its own definition, large enough to include only itself, and to trace out the channel along which the great stream of Christian life and thought must of necessity flow. These definitions have been very much like the levees which they throw up along the banks of the lower Mississippi: they serve excellently well in low water, but in the first freshet the great river washes them away, and finds new channels

for itself. And so it has been with every great revival of Christianity. It has surprised those who have made the definitions of Christianity. The definitions of the Schoolmen were well received in the Middle Ages, and seemed to be final; but they were futile obstacles to the rising tide of the Reformation. All the properties of the Church of England could not prevent the revival under Wesley. Christianity has often been defined as a system of ecclesiasticism; but that has never prevented fervent mystics from being born who have seen in Christianity a direct access to God without need of church or priest. Christianity meant a theory of atonement and of trinity,— but not to Channing. Christianity meant the belief in miracles and in an infallible Bible,— but not to Theodore Parker. The Westminster Assembly of divines declared gravely that the revelation of God had ceased when the canon of Scripture was completed, and that henceforth "nothing was to be added by any new revelation of the spirit." But, when a man feels in his own heart that a new revelation

of the spirit has indeed come to him, what can any assembly of divines do? The strong man keepeth his house, but only until the stronger than he has come.

In religion, as in love, "nice customs curt'sy to great kings." When the king has come to his own again, all the acts of exclusion which were passed during the interregnum are null and void. Said Jesus, "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." The temple stands unchanged for generations till one comes so full of the spirit of worship that he is able to destroy the temple and forthwith build it again. And the old creeds, which have stood unchanged through ages of chilling doubt, fall away before the coming of a new age of faith, as the leaves which cling all winter to the oaks fall off at the fresh budding of the spring. Traditional religion is always at the mercy of personal religion. It holds its own only by sufferance, and the memory of what the spirit said in the past fades away when once more the spirit speaks to men in the present.

What does this all mean? It means simply this: that religion is not a form, but a life, and life is the one thing which it is impossible for us to define; it is that which mocks at all the forms it uses. Life is the most persistent thing we know, and yet the most susceptible to change. It is the artist which is continually moulding the world to its desire; and yet it is of all things most plastic, and is influenced by every touch. Could we have seen the first germ of life that appeared upon our planet, by what possibility could we have defined it? What prophet could have foretold what forms it must take? And yet, if our wise men speak truly, in that simple germ there was the promise and the potency of all the forms of vital existence. Could we have stood and watched it with the eye of wisdom, what could we have said but this? A new force has come into play, and henceforth this planet is to be the battle-field on which is to be fought out its mighty struggle for existence. At the beginning it seems to be the weakest and the most helpless of all things: it seems that all the

odds are against the persistence of the vital force. All the forces of nature seem hostile, and are combining to destroy it; and only after long ages have passed will these forces become its servants. In the mean time, how is life to escape its enemies? There is only one way by which it can do it, and that is by continually yielding to them, by changing its forms as new dangers approach.

Only through its myriad disguises has life been able to survive. The old myths are full of stories of metamorphosis, but none so strange as that which sober science tells. From form to form it maketh haste, ever clothing itself in new colors and eluding its old enemies. Each new circumstance which makes life seemingly impossible, while it destroys the old form under which it existed, is but the mould in which some new type of life is cast.

What is true of life in general is true of every form of life. It is true of religion: it is true of that particular form of religion which we call Christianity. Christianity has existed through eighteen centuries be-

cause it has taken in turn the impress of each century that has passed. When we go back to the beginning, and ask ourselves concerning primitive Christianity, we are apt to be sadly disappointed; and the more critical our study of its original documents, the more meagre seem to be the results. Each sect of Christendom claims to be the direct descendant of this primitive form of Christianity. These claims can neither be proven nor disproven. What did Jesus teach in regard to the Church, its ministers, its doctrines, and its ordinances? What did he teach in regard to predestination, in regard to the trinity, in regard to atonement, the apostolic succession, or the second probation? What was the practice of the early Church and its theory in regard to social questions? Was that community of goods of which we read only something accidental, or were these early Christians seeking to inaugurate a socialistic commonwealth? He who wishes to dogmatize on these subjects may do so with impunity, but he who wishes to find the ultimate facts must confess that the sources

of information we have are not sufficient. One thing we are safe in saying: that not one of the existing sects of Christendom is an exact reproduction of the earliest type.

The origin of Christianity, like the origin of most great historic movements, is shrouded in obscurity. Even Paul did not enter into the thought of the first circle of the Galilean disciples. He boasts that he received his gospel, not through them, but by direct inspiration of his own; and, when it pleased God to reveal his Son in him, he went not up to Jerusalem to the other disciples, but he went into Arabia, and there in solitude wrought out his thought.

The claim that some one type of Christianity represents exactly the first, and has been miraculously preserved, so that it only is to-day entitled to receive the name "Christianity," is baseless. It is most easily disproved when made by great historic churches like the Catholic and the Anglican, whose development and changes have been wrought in the full light of history. We know how much older some

of their rites and doctrines are than the early Christianity, and how much newer are others. To say that they are Christian no more means that all of their characteristics can be traced to a single source in the Gospels than to say that the Mississippi River rises in Lake Itasca means that every drop of water which flows through the great river into the gulf had its origin in Minnesota. So Christianity to-day is a great historic stream. We trace its course to the Galilean hills, but it has had great tributaries flowing into it. Roman, Grecian, Egyptian, Persian, and Gothic streams have joined it; and the waters have been long intermingled.

What, then, was primitive Christianity, or, rather, what shall we say Christianity is in its essence? It is just what Jesus said it was,—a germ of spiritual life, itself the result of countless causes in the past and to be the cause of countless effects in the future. "The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard-seed, which, when it is sown upon the earth, is less than all the seeds that are upon the

earth, yet, when it is sown, groweth up and becometh greater than all herbs, and putteth out great branches." Christianity has put forth many great branches in the past, and is destined to put forth more in the future. We cannot define it until it is finished, and no religion is finished until it is dead. Because we believe in the vitality of Christianity, we cannot limit it to this or that form.

And so the sympathetic student of Christianity comes to different forms in which it is manifested. He sees that one is better than another, finer in its significance, and stronger in its fibre; and yet he denies to none of them the great Christian name. He sees in all of them the historic developments of a single spiritual life. When thus we come to look upon different forms of Christianity, we may criticise all, but we will despise none. The ignorant Catholic looks upon Luther as the arch-enemy, and sees in the Reformation of the sixteenth century only a great outburst of hate against the holy Mother Church. The enlightened Catholic, though he may still regret the

schism, sees that it was inevitable. And so the ignorant Protestant looks upon the Church of Rome as "the scarlet woman," and he imagines that all the claims of papal supremacy arose from the evil machinations and impostures of priests. But go back with me to the time when this supremacy of Rome began. Ask what was the reason that all Christendom looked there for help and bowed down to this great power. As we study the origin of it, we see the reason of it. It was a time when the old Roman Empire was tottering to its fall, and civilization with it. Men, affrighted, were looking toward Rome again for that power which should save them from the impending ruin. Who is there to give help? The emperors? A degenerate race, no longer living in the cities of the Cæsars, but hiding in the marshes of Ravenna. The senators? There was a time when their very presence awed the barbarous Gauls, but now they are mere sycophants, worthy only of the scorn that is heaped upon them. The people of Rome? Once the ambassadors of Pyrrhus said that every one of them

was a king, and now they are but slaves rejoicing in their fetters. The Roman legions? Once they were the terror of the world: now they are the mercenaries selling their swords to the highest bidder. Who, then, shall save in this hour of bitter need? There is but one man able to do the deed, but one high office which has not been bereft of majesty. Attila and his Huns are at the gate of Italy. Who is it that goes forth to meet them? It is Leo, the bishop, who goes unarmed into their camp; and, when he returns, Rome for the time is saved. A spiritual might was his which awed the barbarians. In all those panic-stricken ages but one institution remained strong, and that was the Church. In time of need, it armed itself with new weapons against the barbarians. With consummate strategy it outflanked the enemy at every point. Before the barbarians could reach Italy missionaries of the cross, who were the soldiers of civilization as well, had met them, and conquered them in their own dark forests. The Vikings sailed away on their voyages to the south, and Christen-

dom trembled; but, when they returned, it was to find the cross planted at the head of the fiord, and to hear tales how the White Christ had come and conquered Odin in his immemorial fastnesses. Do you wonder that men who saw these things wondered and worshipped? Do you wonder that the men who did these things were received with boundless adoration and confidence by those whom they saved? Always it is the law of life that he that overcometh shall have power over the nations. The power of the Church of Rome was nobly won. Alas that it has not always been so nobly used! And if, in that great struggle with barbarism, the Church itself suffered; if, in going down in that hand-to-hand conflict with Paganism, it became itself half paganized; if a thousand dark superstitions clung to it, and if its voice lost something of its old purity, — let us be sorrowful, but never scornful. Every battle of the warrior is with confused noise and with garments rolled in blood; yet the warrior is not less worthy of our plaudits because of the stains and the scars of the battle.

When Dante had won his way through the darkness of hell, and at last in the light of day began his ascent of the mountain, his guide wet his hands with dew and gently washed from his face the smoke which had gathered on it. And so must every true reformer feel toward the great Church to which we owe so much. When we see it emerging all darkened, but triumphant, from the inferno of barbarism, we should look upon it not with contempt, but with love. The new day has dawned; and, now that it stands in the morning light, let it cleanse itself from the old stains with the morning dew.

And so it is with the controversies between rationalist and traditionalist, radical and conservative, orthodox and liberalist. These controversies, of themselves, do little; for the aim of the controversialist is to find out the weak point of his antagonist. But what profits this? Suppose I can prove that, in regard to certain things, my neighbor is only a fool, am I wiser for my discovery? It is not his weak point, but it is his strong point

which may help me. Suppose he is frightened at a shadow, I want to know the shadow of what. Suppose this doctrine of his is only a fiction, still the important question remains, On what fact is that fiction founded, and how was it suggested? Says Dr. Martineau, "Every fiction that has ever laid strong hold of human belief is the mistaken image of some great truth to which reason will direct its search; while half-reason is content with laughing at the superstition, and unreason with believing it." When we assume this attitude, we begin to see through all its variations of thought the essential unity of Christianity. The most opposite types of Christianity, we have seen, have points of kinship. How far apart seem the Catholic and the so-called liberal Christian! and yet in their ultimate ideal they are one, for Catholicity and liberality are synonymes. Each of them is aiming to get beyond sectarian narrowness, and to build a universal Church. They agree as to their ideals: they disagree as to their way of reaching them. Calvinism and rationalism stand in antagonism

to-day; but, when we go back to the sixteenth century, we see that then Calvinism was rationalism. It was the application of the scientific method to the facts of religion as then understood. John Wesley had many harsh things to say of the mystics, whose influence he thought he had escaped; and yet, in spite of this, his Methodism was but a kind of mysticism, and his experiences of religion were but the sudden flashings of the inner light. There is a spiritual gravitation that holds us all. We emphasize our differences, but the law of the universe works steadily for unity. We contradict what our neighbor says, but we are silent when we find out what he means. In the Middle Ages people laughed at the idea of the antipodes: it was so unspeakably absurd that people should walk with their feet upward. But, when men travelled to the antipodes, they found that they very easily adapted themselves to the situation. You say you do not understand how reasonable people can believe this or that thing which offends you. You are severely orthodox; and you cannot understand how

one can pretend to have any religion at all, and not believe in the atonement and the infallibility of the Bible. You have a fine sense of propriety, and you don't understand how people can go through the streets beating tambourines for the glory of God like the Salvation Army. You are extremely matter-of-fact, and believe only in that which you can see and touch; and you cannot understand how any one can be a theosophist. You are a very advanced thinker; and you like to have some new thought every day, or something that seems to you new. You do not understand how the Churchman can take comfort in a liturgy just because of its old associations. Well, probably the fact is that you do not understand. Did it never occur to you that it might be a very excellent thing if you were to try to understand? And perhaps, in trying to understand your neighbor's religion, you, too, might be better able to understand the real meaning of your own. We build our Babel towers of spiritual pride, that all the world may see us, and come to us; and the result is only a sad

confusion of tongues. We forget ourselves, and go out and try to look at things through our neighbor's eyes; and we find that there is one language which never has been confused, but which all understand.

In this slight study of the different types of religion we have found something admirable in each. We acknowledge our debt to Roman Catholicism for its beauty and its dignity, for its ideal universality and actual grandeur; our debt to Calvinism for its stern sincerity, its logical consistency, its unbending rectitude; our debt to Methodism for its warmth; to rationalism for its searching light; to mysticism for its vision of peace. But what is greater than any one of these? All of them. Our very recognition of the truth which each contains makes us realize how fragmentary each is. Milton compares the work of sectarianism to that of Typhon in the Egyptian myth, who cut in pieces the body of Osiris. So he says: "They took the virgin Truth, hewed her lovely form in a thousand pieces, and scattered them to the four winds. From that time ever since the sad friends of

Truth, such as durst appear, imitating the careful search that Isis made for the mangled body of Osiris, went up and down, gathering limb by limb, as they could find them. And we have not yet found them all, Lords and Commons, nor ever shall do so till her Master's second coming: he shall bring together every joint and member, and shall mould them into one immortal feature of loveliness and perfection."

The partial truth which each sect illustrates but makes us long for the full truth which would come, were all united.

We come through the study of the sects, to the all-compelling ideal of the unity of Christendom. The Church which will satisfy us must be not in name, but in fact, the Church of unity. The great things are the things which make for unity. The passion for righteousness, the love of truth, the sense of need, the solemn awe in the presence of the Infinite, the unconquerable hope that looks on death and yet prophesies life, — what form of religion is so divine that it does not find in these things the spring of its power and the secret of its

ineffable charm? And what form of religion is so poor that it does not to some degree express these things? The earthen vessels are various and grotesque; but the treasure within is one, "for the excellency of the glory is not of man, but of God."

But how may this unity be practically realized? I have very little hope in any external power that shall compel uniformity. I think such external union under present conditions neither desirable nor practicable. When we read that different competing firms have united their interests in one great trust, we expect very soon after to find a modest item in the papers to the effect that this trust has taken measures to limit production. And, were all the churches of Christendom united in one Church, the next movement would be to repress the liberty of prophesying. If we cannot have liberty and union, we must cling ever to liberty. But I am one who believes that through the most perfect liberty will come at last the perfect unity.

You long for the communion of saints, for the privilege of some large fellowship,

from which you imagine that you are shut out by the different forms of ecclesiasticism. But the problem of Christian unity can be solved by each individual for himself. You can have all the communion and all the fellowship that you want if you are willing to accept it in the way it comes. There is no power in any sect or church that can prevent that largeness of sympathy which every man of true religion exercises. I like that good old New England Puritan who, when on account of some church quarrel he was excommunicated by the church, refused to stay excommunicated. We read that for twenty years the good man came every communion Sunday, and brought with him a bit of bread and bit of wine of his own, and there, in the safety of his high pew, communed with the church, in spite of the deacons. When a man brings his own communion with him, who can prevent? Whether we shall enjoy the communion of saints depends on ourselves. The best that belongs to Calvinism and the best that belongs to Romanism is mine, if I seek it. This fellowship of the spirit,

which is the only fellowship that one need care to obtain,— this fellowship is ours, if we will.

I have said that religion is a life, and life is that which brings unity. We come into sympathy with each other just in proportion as our life grows strong and full. The problem of church relations must always settle itself according to the demands of one's own life.

What each one of us wants in religion is a more abundant life, and the only question is whether this form or that form gives it. Does a certain form of religion satisfy your deepest needs? Does it make life larger and more radiant? Does it make the laws of duty seem more absolute and divine? Then that is your religion, though all the world should scorn it; that is your word of life, because, when you hear it, you live. So long as it thus speaks to you, your work is to leave all and follow it.

But has the time come when it ceases to be this? Does it no longer speak to you in a voice of divine authority, but has it begun to apologize for its own existence? Does

it no longer bear you up as with great wings, but has it become a dead weight which you must carry? Does it seem most doubtful to you when your mind is clearest, least necessary to you when you are most in need? Is your religion no longer some bright ideal, but only a reminiscence of the past? Does it no longer compel the upward look and the onward step? Then, though all men say that this is the only religion of the world, flee from it as from a graven idol. This is no longer your religion: it is your superstition. You are no longer in the great current of religious life: you are only in

> "Some dry river channel where the bulrushes tell
> How the water was wont to go warbling so sweetly and well."

But, though the water once flowed never so sweetly along that channel, it is nothing now to you. But the living waters are not far away. Even now you hear their murmur.

> "From heart to heart, from creed to creed,
> The hidden river runs."

And, when you find what is indeed the spring of your true inspiration, you will find those waters again which shall satisfy your thirst.

That which once was true you tell me is true no longer; that which once you loved with all your heart seems no longer worthy of your devotion. But may it not be because some higher truth, some purer love, is coming to you? Then the thing which your heart at its best most purely loves, that follow; that truth which your own mind most clearly sees, that speak; and, finding there the secret of the upbuilding of your individual religious life, you come upon the secret of religious unity as well, for, "speaking the truth in love, we grow up to Him who is the head."

Paul's glowing ideal still remains to be fulfilled. It is the unity of religion through the fulfilment of manhood. It is not the artificial unity which comes when individuality is suppressed, and all men are reduced to a single pattern. It is the unity which comes when "we are strong to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth

and length and height and depth" of our religion. It is the unity which comes when we "walk worthily of the calling wherewith we are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long suffering, forbearing one another in love, giving diligence to keep the unity of spirit in the bond of peace." It is the unity which comes when we recognize most clearly the varied gifts of men, and how each is necessary to that great body which grows by that "which every joint supplieth, according to the working in due measure of each several part." It is the unity which cannot be made perfect till manhood is made perfect, "till we all come in the unity of faith unto the full-grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

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1892

Crothers, Samuel McChord, 1857
Members of one body : six se
by Samuel McChord Crothers. --
G. H. Ellis, 1892.
132 p. ; 20 cm.
Contents: Roman Catholicism
Calvinism -- Methodism -- Rati
-- Mysticism -- The unity of
Christendom.
"Preached at Unity Church, S
Minnesota."
1. Christian sects. 2. Serm
American. 3. Unitarian Univer
churches--Sermons. 4. Unitari
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Paul--Sermons. I. Unity Chur
Paul, Minn.). II. Title

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